

2 Senators Hit Fulbright Blast At Intervention

Dirksen, Smathers Back U.S. Move in Dominican Revolt

By JACK BELL
Associated Press Staff Writer

Senate Republican Leader Everett M. Dirksen and Democratic Sen. George A. Smathers challenged today Sen. J. W. Fulbright's contention that the Johnson administration bungled the Dominican crisis.

Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told the Senate Wednesday President Johnson was given "unsound advice" and that fear of a Communist takeover in Santo Domingo was based on misinformation and on "exaggerated estimates of Communist influence."

Premise Called Faulty

He said the administration acted on the premise that the revolution was controlled by Communists—"a premise which it failed to establish at the time and has not established since."

The Arkansas Democrat said "the danger to American lives was more a pretext than a reason for the massive United States intervention." He said, "In their panic lest the Dominican Republic become another Cuba, some of our officials seem to have forgotten that virtually all reform movements attract some Communist support."

Fulbright said Johnson, on the basis of the information and counsel he received, could hardly have acted other than he did. The senator said he had no objection to sending a modest contingent of U.S. troops to Santo Domingo to save American lives, but claimed there was "overaction" by the administration in the dispatch of 22,000 men.

Diplomats Blamed

Fulbright placed the blame for the failure of American policy there on Ambassador W. Tapley Bennett Jr. and other American officials who, he said, advised the President.

Fulbright conceded Bennett had no easy choices in the situation. "Nonetheless," he said, "It is the task of diplomacy to make wise decisions when they need to be made and U.S. diplomacy failed to do so in the Dominican crisis."

In a joint interview Dirksen and Smathers, secretary of the Democratic conference, disagreed with Fulbright's interpretation of the situation. Like Fulbright, they attended a White House meeting the night Johnson made his decision to send in troops.

Dirksen said he agreed with Johnson's decision then "and I agree with it now."

Mandatory, Dirksen Says

"A good many people had already been killed in Santo Domingo," Dirksen said. "The Communists were building up their strength. The country could have been torn apart. The President had to act."

Smathers said those at the White House meeting were told there were available reports on 588 trained Communists already on hand in Santo Domingo who could be expected to attempt to take over leadership in the revolt.

"The consensus at the meeting was that we couldn't afford to have another Cuba," he said. "Nobody disagreed to the plan to send troops."

AMrine Action Noted

Fulbright told the Senate "no American lives were lost in Santo Domingo until the Marines began exchanging fire with the rebels."

Of Communist involvement in the Dominican result, Fulbright said there is an important difference between Communist support and Communist control of a political movement.

"It is quite possible to compete with the Communists for influence in a reform movement rather than abandon it to them," he said.

Fulbright said that by its intervention the United States lent credence to the idea that it is the enemy of social revolution in Latin America "and that the only choice Latin Americans have is between communism and reaction."

Moyers Is Cautious

Fulbright said he had not heard from Johnson after delivering his speech.

Bill D. Moyers, White House press secretary, asked for comment, said: "I have talked to a number of officials in government, Congress and other wise, who simply do not believe the senator's conclusions are

justified."

Moyers declined to say Johnson was one of them.

Moyers was asked if Johnson still feels—as he has said in the past publicly—that Bennett is one of the nation's outstanding diplomats.

"The President's views on Ambassador Bennett have been made known before and have not changed," Moyers replied.

Asked whether Fulbright had told Johnson or the White House officials in advance about his speech, Moyers said, "To my knowledge, no."

The State Department said it had no comment on the speech.

Sen. Joseph S. Clark, D-Pa., a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, said he is in "complete accord" with Fulbright's views and called them "overdue, sound and wise."

Another committee member, Sen. Clifford P. Case, R-N.J., said he heard nothing in hearings of the Foreign Relations Committee that he thought would justify Fulbright's conclusions. He said the chairman must be relying on "outside information."

Long Backs Louisiana Sen. Russell B. Long, the assistant Democratic leader, said Fulbright was not speaking for the committee but for himself — a point the Arkansas senator already had made. Long said Johnson was "well advised" to send troops into Santo Domingo.

Long told the Senate that at the White House meeting no one, Fulbright included, raised a dissenting voice.

Smathers demanded to know: "What's wrong with trying to save a country from communism?"

Senate Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield, a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, said in an interview he agrees with Fulbright that there was "no major Communist threat" in Santo Domingo, although he said once a revolt starts "they swarm in like flies."

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